

## Smoky Mountain RC&D – Tennessee Picnic Event

Tennessee Picnic is a community-based, non-profit service organization. Members are residents or former residents of Newport, Tennessee – each of whom have their family roots firmly planted in this area.



The organization is headquartered in Cocke County, Tennessee with 99% of its members living in the county. Members of the organization meet on a monthly basis to plan activities and celebrations for their hometown. The goal of Tennessee Picnic is to empower members to undertake both charitable and cultural initiatives in their community. The Smoky Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council obtained a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission to promote the Tennessee Picnic Organization.

The idea for the Tennessee Picnic originated in 1945 in the hearts and minds of Cocke County's older African-Americans who remember when they were only allowed to visit the City Park (now the Newport City Park) one day out of the year – August 8. Since that time, people of color have wanted to hold on to that tradition, as well as to stress the value of being able to come together and share their heritage, culture, and art.



The Tennessee Picnic Culture Art Project's (TPCAP) evening of entertainment took place at the Newport City Park and was open to the public. It was made possible through a joint effort with the City of Newport.

TPCAP was promoted in Cocke, Hamblen, and Sevier counties, as well as in the Tri-Cities area. Information was also sent to former residents of Cocke County who regularly come back for the celebration. Tennessee Picnic collaborated with the Boy's Club, Newport Nursing Home, and various local churches to promote the event.

The goal of this event was to instill a sense of pride relating to African-American art and culture. Participants had an opportunity to reconnect to their hometown roots. The benefits created by the Tennessee Picnic organization are generally visible in the community throughout the year, not merely in August. Members have held supportive roles in other community initiatives, such as Christmas in July and Gradfest. Members of the Tennessee Picnic have helped to provide health screenings for those living in the area. In addition to this, they have also assisted in the awarding of scholarships to local college-bound men and women. The positive impacts of this organization are readily apparent – and far-reaching.